

### **Commissioner's Recommendation**

On September 25, 2003, Commissioner of Public Lands Doug Sutherland announced the recommendation to designate four Puget Sound locations as the first reserves in the state's new aquatic reserves program. The four sites are on state-owned aquatic lands next to Maury Island, Fidalgo Bay, Cypress Island, and Cherry Point.

Sutherland instructed the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to review each of the sites under the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) and work with the public to analyze the recommendation in order to manage the sites in a way that is compatible with the surrounding lands and zoning.

Two other sites in Commencement Bay – Olympic View and Middle Waterway – were not recommended as reserves. These sites were, however, recognized as important restored habitat. The Commissioner recommended that they continue to be withdrawn from leasing, recognizing the value of protecting and restoring small urban bay environments.

### **Open House Meetings**

DNR conducted open house meetings in May and June to provide the public with an opportunity to review and comment on program information being developed, and additional input for each of the six sites being considered for the Aquatic Reserve Program. Below, under each reserve name, are the comments for each open house.

### **Technical Advisory Committee Completes Evaluations of Six Sites**

The Aquatic Reserve Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) was selected in May.

DNR staff conducted site visits for the Advisory Committee in June. DNR thanks the following "local site expert" experts, who provided additional insight about each site, and led each site visit.

- Maury Island – Kollin Higgins with the King County Department of Natural Resources
- Olympic View and Middle Waterway – John O'Loughlin with the City of Tacoma.
- Cypress Island – Russel Barsh with the Samish Indian Nation.
- Fidalgo Bay – Dan Penttila with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.
- Cherry Point – April Markiewicz & Wayne Landis with Western Washington University and Michael Kyte with Golder Associates.

Site evaluation guidance and criteria were used by the Committee to evaluate sites as potential reserves. The guidance is based on the September 6, 2002 Aquatic Reserve Program Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The work included a rigorous peer review of the EIS.

### **Site Proposals and Site Evaluation**

Site proposals and information for each of the six sites was evaluated by July, and included:

1. Site proposal
2. Site evaluation information (information provided at the open house meetings)

Information was reviewed by the Advisory Committee in August and, in conjunction with their impressions from site visits, was used to evaluate each site as a potential reserve. A consensus recommendation followed for four sites as Environmental Aquatic Reserves: Maury Island, Fidalgo Bay, Cypress Island and Cherry Point. The committee recommended examining three potential boundary options for the Maury Island site, and two for Cherry Point. Two Commencement Bay sites – Olympic View and Middle Waterway – were not recommended as reserves.

**Next Steps ...**

For those sites recommended for environmental aquatic reserve status, DNR is developing draft management plans and will initiate a public benefit analysis. These two tasks will take place through a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) process under the State Environmental Protection Act (SEPA).

DNR is currently holding public meetings relating to these sites, and will publish the SEPA documents in spring.